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CHARLESTON MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO FEDERAL CONTRABAND CIGARETTE CHARGES

HUNTINGTON, W.Va. – Basim Ali Talouzi, 45, of Charleston, West Virginia pleaded guilty today before United States District Judge Robert C. Chambers to conspiracy to transport, receive, possess, purchase and sell contraband cigarettes and distribution of oxycodone. Between July 2010 until January 2011, at or near Huntington and elsewhere, Talouzi admitted to taking part in a conspiracy with other known associates to purchase and transport contraband cigarettes. On three occasions between August 27, 2010 and December 20, 2010 the defendant, aided by an associate, arranged for the sale of approximately 588,000 contraband cigarettes to another individual. Talouzi further admitted to arranging for the sale of contraband cigarettes on 14 occasions between September 14, 2010 and January 5, 2011. In total, the defendant arranged for the sale and delivery of approximately 2,594,400 contraband cigarettes to a known individual. On or about March 2, 2011, Talouzi admitted to arranging the delivery of an additional 240,000 contraband cigarettes to a known individual.

The total amount of contraband cigarettes equals 3,422,400 or 17,112 cartons. The West Virginia tax per carton is \$5.50. Therefore, the total tax loss to the state of West Virginia is \$94,116.

The defendant further admitted that on or about September 14, 2010 at or near Huntington, aided by a known individual, sold approximately 30 80-milligram oxycodone tablets to an undercover agent with the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco Firearms and Explosives (ATF) in exchange for \$2,250. Between July 2010 and October 2010, the defendant further admitted to distributing or aiding and abetting the distribution of a total of 87 80-milligram oxycodone tablets and 50 30-milligram oxycodone tablets to an undercover ATF agent.

Talouzi faces up to 25 years in prison and a \$1,250,000 fine when he is sentenced on June 27, 2011.

The investigation was conducted by the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). Assistant United States Attorney Charles Miller is handling the prosecution.

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